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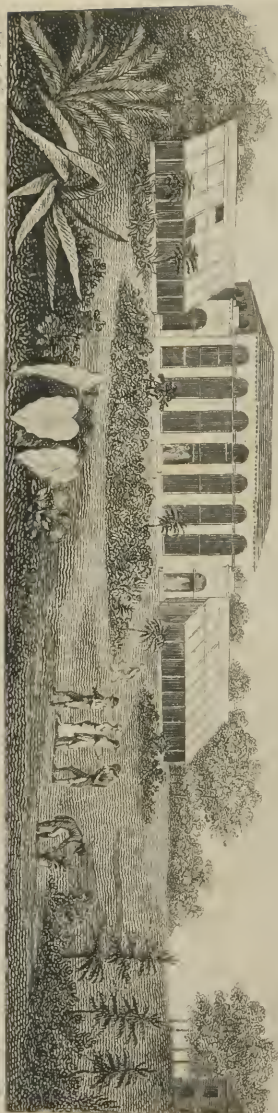
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U. S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare
Public Health Service

Description.



View of the BOTANICAL GARDEN at ALBANY in the vicinity of the CITY of NEW YORK.





Description

OF

ELGIN GARDEN,

THE PROPERTY OF

DAVID HOSACK, M. D.



IN the year 1801, Dr. Hosack, being the professor of Botany and Materia Medica in Columbia College, purchased twenty acres of land, near New-York, for the establishment of a Botanic Garden. Its situation is on the middle road, between the Bloomingdale and Kingsbridge roads. Its distance from the City-Hall is about three miles and an half. Its inclination is toward the east and south ; so that the plants have the advantage of the rising and mid-day sun. The view from the most elevated part of Elgin-ground, is variegated and extensive. The East and North Rivers, with their vast amount of navigation, are plain in sight. Beyond these great thoroughfares of business, the fruitful fields of Long-Island, and the picturesque shores of New-Jersey, give beauty and interest to the prospect. The tract contains within itself a remarkable difference of soils, from the rocky up-land, to the hilly slope, and the moist and watery bottom. There is consequently that union of situation and convenience, which is adapted to the cultivation of the great variety of vegetable species.

The conservatory and hot-houses present a front of one hundred and eighty feet. They are not only constructed

with great architectural taste and elegance, but experience has also shown, they are well calculated for the preservation of the most tender exotics that require protection from the severity of our climate. The grounds are also arranged and planted agreeably to the most approved stile of ornamental gardening. The whole is surrounded by a belt of forest trees and shrubs judiciously chequered and mingled ; and enclosed by a well constructed stone-wall.

The interior is divided into various compartments, not only calculated for the instruction of the student in Botany, but subservient to agriculture, the arts, and to manufactures. A nursery is also begun, for the purpose of introducing into this country the choicest fruits of the table. Nor is the kitchen garden neglected in this establishment. An apartment is also devoted to experiments in the culture of those plants which may be advantageously introduced and naturalized to our soil and climate, that are at present annually imported from abroad. But this institution merits a more minute detail of its various uses. It is therefore requested that the reader will accompany the visitor in a walk while he surveys the different objects which attract his notice in this inclosure.

The forest trees and shrubs which surround the establishment, first claim his attention. Here are beautifully distributed and combined the oak, the plane, the elm, the sugar maple, the locust, the horse chesnut, the mountain ash, the basket willow, and various species of poplar. In front of these, a similarly varied collection of shrubs, natives and foreign, compose an amphitheatre, which, winding with the walks, presents at every step something new and engaging. On the other side the eye reposes on the green lawn which is occasionally intercepted with groups of trees and shrubs happily adapted to its varied surface.

In extending his walks to the garden, on each side, he is equally gratified and instructed by the numerous plants which are here associated in scientific order, for the information of the student in Botany or Medicine. Here the Turkey rhubarb, Carolina pink-root, the poppy and the fox-glove, with many other plants of the *Materia Medica*, are seen in cultivation. The agriculturist also here observes the plants most useful for the food of man, cattle or kine, as well as those which are destructive by their poisonous prop-

erties. The artist and manufacturer may also here receive a lesson of instruction.

As he proceeds he arrives at a nursery of the finest fruits, which the proprietor has been enabled to procure from various parts of the world, and from which the establishment will hereafter derive one of the principal means of its support.

The visitor next comes in view of a pond of water devoted to the varieties of nymphæa, pontederia and other aquatics which adorn its surface, while the adjacent grounds which are moist afford the proper and natural soil for a great variety of our most valuable native plants. The rhododendrons, magnolias, the kalmias, the willows, the stuartia; the candleberry myrtle; the cupressus disticha, and the sweet-smelling clethra alnifolia, here grow in rich luxuriance, and compose a beautiful picture in whatever direction they fall under his eye.

As he leaves this groupe, and passes to the higher situations of this delightfully varied surface, he finds a corresponding distribution of the numerous plants which compose this collection.

Here a rocky and elevated spot attracts his attention, by the varied species of pine, juniper, yew, and hemlock, with which it is covered. There a solitary oak breaks the surface of the lawn; here a group of poplars; there the more splendid foliage of the different species of magnolia, intermixed with the fringe tree, the thorny aralia, and the snow drop halesia, call his willing notice.

Entering the green-house, his eye is saluted with a rich and varied collection: the silver protea, the lemon, the orange, the oleander, the citron, the shaddock, the myrtle, the jasmine and the numerous and infinitely varied family of geranium, press upon his view, while the perfumes emitted from the fragrant daphne, heliotropium, and the coronilla no less attract his notice than do the splendid petals of the camellia japonica, the amaryllis, the cistus, erica and purple magnolia.

In the hot-house he finds himself translated to the heat of the tropics. Here he observes the golden pine, the sugar cane, the cinnamon, the ginger, the splendid strelitzia, and ixora coccinea intermixed with the bread fruit, the coffee tree, the plantain, the arrow root, the sago, the avi-

gato pear, the mimosa yielding the gum arabic, and the fragrant farnesiana.

Here are also to be seen the succulent tribes of aloe, sedum, mesembryanthemum, the night blowing cereus, and the cactus which feeds the cochineal, covered with its insects.

In front of the buildings are several beautiful clumps composed of the more delicate and valuable shrubs intermingled with a great variety of roses, kalmias and azaleas. Their borders are also successively enamelled with the crocus, the snow drop, the asphodel, the hyacinth, and the more splendid species of the iris.

Here also is *viola tricolor*,

—————“ A little western flower
Before milk white : now purple, with loves wounds,”

saluting the senses with its beautiful assemblage of colours but yielding in fragrance to its rival *viola odorata* which

—————“ Sweeter than the lids of Juno’s eyes,
Or Cythereas breath,”—————

also adds zest to this delicious banquet.

Every tree, shrub, and herbaceous plant is labelled and designated by its botanic name for the instruction of the student.

Dr. Hosack has also connected with this establishment, an extensive *Herbarium* which contains not only a great variety of plants collected by himself in Great Britain, and in this country, but is also enriched by many valuable specimens furnished by the late celebrated Danish professor Vahl ; by Curtis, and Dickson, and by duplicates from the Hortus Siccus of Linnæus, presented by Dr. Smith, the learned president of the Linnæan Society, and the present possessor of the rich collections of the celebrated Swede.

To this establishment Dr. H. has also added a well chosen *Botanical Library*, consisting of the most celebrated works, both ancient and modern, which are necessary to illustrate that science, as well as its application to medicine, to agriculture and the arts to which it is subservient.

Such is an imperfect sketch of the beauties and riches of this ornament of our state and country.

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